

ART. IX.—*Memoranda on the Museum of the Asiatic Society.* By
DR. M^cCLELLAND.

A Museum may be considered in the light of a philosophical book, in which language is represented by works of nature and art. If system be important in common undertakings, in a Museum it is every thing; and not only should every object be placed according to the position it occupies in the history of art, or in the system of nature, but the very apartments in which the collections are placed, and the cabinets, and even the glasses in which they are contained, should be conformable to some general plan, as much as possible in imitation of the simplicity of nature. To be able to adopt a plan, requires that we should have something to work upon; and in proposing a plan for the guidance of future operations in the Museum, we cannot be too grateful to those who have by their exertions, within a comparatively short space of time, put us in possession of our present instructive and respectable collections.

To Captain Herbert and Mr. Calder we are not only indebted for extensive geological and mineralogical collections, but as being among the first contributors to the Society's collection of natural objects, which may be said to have commenced in 1828 with the revival of the Physical Committee.

Although a brief space of ten years has only elapsed since our Museum of Natural History was first formed, yet more changes have taken place in that short period among those who have taken an active part in its management, than in any similar European establishment in half a century.

This is one reason why a set of rules should be adopted by which the steady advancement of the Museum may be secured; and another reason for such rules, is the growing importance of the collection itself; which requires on the part of the Society a stricter surveillance over the establishment entrusted with its management than formerly.

Before proposing rules it is necessary to explain the different purposes they are required to answer.

On the subject of Cabinets, it is necessary that they should be chosen with strict attention to the appearance and convenience of the Museum. They should be of two kinds, namely, glass cases for walls, and tables with glazed covers for the centre of the rooms, of the pattern proposed by Mr. Jameson, in imitation of the Edinburgh Museum.

The first description of cases fitted up with shelves will answer for

birds, fishes, and the smaller reptiles and mammalia which may be disposed of along the walls. The second description of cabinets will answer equally for shells, insects, rocks, minerals, and fossils. Thus every object for which a cabinet is likely to be required may find a place in one of the two sorts, to which it is proposed to confine the furniture of the Museum.

That an unnecessary variety in the form of cabinets destroys the uniformity of the Museum, and that lofty cabinets placed in the middle of the apartments, as at present, convey a sense of closeness and prevent the use of punkas, so essential in this climate, any one who has paid a visit to the Museum must see.

Indeed, without the strictest attention to some general plan in the fitting up of a Museum, it must appear to persons of taste rather as any thing rather than a place of science. Of all our cabinets, those only in which the perching birds have been placed on shelves by Mr. Jameson ought to be retained longer than it may be convenient to the Society to replace them. Twelve glazed tables of the pattern already alluded to, each nine feet in length, ought to be provided. These would admit of all the rocks and minerals, as well as fossils, which constitute an important portion of the Society's collection, being brought forward and exhibited. Even if twelve tables should prove too many for this object, the spare ones would be ready for the reception of such new collections of interest as might be sent to us in any of the numerous departments for which such tables are intended.

The next subject to consider is the nomenclature of the Museum. It is necessary, for various reasons, that this should not altogether rest on the authority of the Curator. There is a plan which with a little regularity in its execution, will place this very important object on the best possible footing, and at the same time afford to our Museum something more than local interest. Let every species be numbered, and all duplicates be numbered so as to correspond with the species to which they belong in the regular collection.* After retaining a perfect series or two let duplicates or triplicates be forwarded on the part of the Society to individuals eminent in particular branches of science, re-

* There are now in the Museum some hundreds of duplicate skins of birds, some of which appear to have been intended for the East India Company's Museum; these may be all numbered so as to correspond with our own collection, and figured lists transmitted with them to the India House, soliciting that such lists may be returned to the Society with the correct nomenclature inserted opposite to the figures. Anticipating no objection to this, I have already numbered most of the birds in the Society's collection, and have ordered corresponding numbers to be attached to those intended for the Honorable Court.

questing that lists may be returned to the Society with the scientific names inserted opposite to the corresponding numbers, from such lists the names may then be transferred to the objects in the Museum. We should thus not only secure a perfect nomenclature, but at the same time disseminate a knowledge of the productions of India, and give a publicity to the contents of our collection far more important to the advancement of science than could be effected by any other means.

On the establishments of the Museum as they relate to expenditure, I am incompetent to offer any suggestions. It appears from the pecuniary accounts published in the January number of the Journal, that the Museum expenses in 1838 exceeded the Government grant of 200 Rupees per mensem by 1171 Rupees, although 246 Rupees only of that excess appears to be set down for cabinets. During the present year if the requisite cabinets be procured, and the other expenses of the Museum be continued as before, the excess beyond the Government grant for the support of the Museum, will necessarily amount to several thousand rupees.

The persons employed in the Museum at present are—two taxidermists, one on the receipt of 50 and the other 12 Rupees per mensem; two carpenters at 8 Rupees each; and two native servants; whose salaries altogether amount to 88 Rupees per mensem.

The principal taxidermist cannot write, and as he is therefore incapable of keeping any record, it would be necessary to have some one else on the spot to wait on visitors, and assist in carrying on the business of the Museum. In the Library there is an assistant librarian who has been employed for several years on a salary of 30 Rupees a month, it would be necessary that his duties should be extended to the Museum, and that his salary should be raised, say from 30 to 50, or 60 Rupees a month, which would still leave a balance of 70 or 80 a month for petty expenses, so that the Government grant would thus just meet the current expenses of the Museum, exclusive of cabinets and Curator's salary.

If we have a Museum, we must have cabinets; the salary of a Curator is not however considered so essential, and some of the members of the Society have already protested against such an expenditure.

In proposing that the office should be an honorary one, I am guided entirely by what I conceive would be the sentiments of all votaries of science, without any affectation of disinterestedness on my own part. Indeed under any circumstances I could not undertake to hold the office of Curator longer than the plans here proposed should be placed in proper training, after which, the whole might be conducted by a subordinate establishment under the direction of the Committee of

Papers; a more efficient subordinate establishment might be provided for the Museum; the increased value and extent of the collections seem to me to require more than two native servants, while the carpenters might be exchanged for collectors. If native collectors, on a monthly salary of 6 Rupees each be properly attended to and trained, they would soon put us in possession of most of the insects, fishes, and *crustacea* of Bengal, and all such persons, as well as those employed in the Museum, might be placed under the immediate direction of a well educated youth from one of the public schools. It would be necessary that such a person should be well recommended not only for general acquirements, but also for his taste in Natural History; the latter taste of course we could only expect to find in any youth from a Calcutta Seminary, on the *non fit sed nascetur* principle.

After providing all that is necessary in the way of cabinets, collectors, and efficient establishments for conducting the duties of the Museum, if the funds of the Society should still allow of a specific sum being set apart for the remuneration of a Curator so much the better, although I must confess I should rather see him in circumstances that would render pecuniary remuneration from his colleagues unnecessary. As however it some times happens that science and fortune do not go hand in hand, a nominal salary of 30 Rupees a month might be assigned to the office of Curator. It will be for the Committee of Finance to determine whether after providing for the increased expenses attending our augmented collections, a larger sum can consistently with the receipts of the Society be paid for the object in question.

From the above remarks we may deduce the following rules, which appear to embrace all that is necessary to secure the progressive advancement of the Museum :—

1. The direction of the Museum to be entrusted to the Committee of Papers, and its duties superintended by a scientific individual appointed by the Society on the nomination of the Committee.
2. Although the office of Curator is held to be one of distinction, an allowance of 30 Rupees per mensem is granted by the Society, to be drawn or not according as the Curator may feel inclined.
3. That the subordinate establishments in the Museum shall consist, if possible, of two well educated Europeans* or Natives of India, on a salary of not less than 50 and 12 Rupees per month respectively.
4. That the number and occupation of other servants in the Museum shall vary according to circumstances.

* This is not intended to interfere with the persons already employed in the Museum.

5. That only two descriptions of cabinets are to be admitted into the Museum, namely, glass cases of one uniform pattern for the reception of birds, small quadrupeds and the like, which are to be placed along the walls; and, tables with glass covers of an uniform pattern for the reception of shells, insects, fossils requiring cabinets, geological specimens, and minerals; to be placed along the centre of the apartments.
6. That all objects in the Museum be numbered and entered in Museum books to be provided for the purpose, and that duplicates of birds, shells, insects, and the like, be from time to time transmitted on the part of the Society, with figured lists, names of original donors, &c. to such eminent scientific individuals as may seem most likely to afford correct information regarding them, and who should be requested to return the lists with the names and references inserted opposite each figure or number.
7. That all such communications are to be regularly entered in Museum books, together with such replies as may be received on the subject.

June 4th, 1839.

ART. X.—*Observations on the "Report on the Museum of the Asiatic Society, by DR. WM. JAMESON," published in the Journal for March, 1839. By J. T. PEARSON, Assistant Surgeon, formerly Curator of the Museum of the Asiatic Society.*

To the Secretaries to the Asiatic Society.

GENTLEMEN—A paper by Dr. Wm. Jameson, entitled a "Report on the Museum of the Asiatic Society" having appeared in your Journal for March last, reached me to day; and as it appears to contain reflections upon my conduct while Curator of the Society's Museum; and recommendations, which if I had not made I should have neglected, or been ignorant, of my duty; I request you will do me the favour to lay before the Society the following observations. I perceive you went out of your usual course to give the "earliest publicity" to what you deem Dr. Jameson's "very important" paper; and, therefore, I trust you will do me the justice to publish my reply in the next number of your Journal.

Dr. Jameson begins by stating his disinclination to report upon the state of the Society's Museum, lest he might be considered as "attacking the proceedings of his predecessors." A very proper feeling, but